RED BATTLER

# Colonial massacre in Nouméa

# Independence for Kanaky now!

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MAY 16—The French state's West Bank: cops and/or armed settlers assassinated at least three Kanak during the night of the 15th. The massacre was premeditated: the cops came to provoke the militants on the roadblocks, notably at Montravel and Saint-Louis, until they rose up in an explosion that the colonial rulers decided to drown in blood. Hundreds of youth have been wounded and incarcerated, while already 90% of prisoners in the colony are Kanak or Oceanians. [Prime minister] Gabriel Attal decreed the state of emergency and today announced the deployment of the army to Kanaky, including through the requisition of commercial airlines. ***Civil aviation workers: prevent commercial planes transporting troops or cops to Kanaky from taking off!***

LE BOLCHEVIK

We stand with the Kanak people in their struggle for independence. The massacre of 15 May shows the impasse at which the struggle has arrived. The Nouméa Accords concocted by the SP-CP Jospin government in 1998 simply froze the problem, preserving French domination for a further 25 years. The only way to go forward is not through appeals for calm by prolonging the Nouméa Accords or seeking another illusory compromise with French imperialism. The latter desperately clings to Kanaky to maintain a presence in the Pacific. It must be ousted by mobilising the power of the working class—in Kanaky in the nickel industry, the ports and airports and public services—at the head of the oppressed Kanak, Wallisians and ni-Vanuatu immigrants as well as the minority among the Caldoches who are for independence.

This is manifestly not the perspective of the FLNKS [Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front] or the PT [Labour Party] who continue to call for calm and have even denounced the explosion of anger by the Kanak youth. They have sought to channel the growing anger among the Kanak in demonstrations of unequalled magnitude (on 13 April 60,000 people assembled, nearly a quarter of the population of the colony—the Kanak themselves are only about 120,000), with the aim of warning Paris that tension was rising. For months they begged Macron to do something because they wouldn't be able to restrain their people forever, in particular the young generation. The arrogance of French imperialism vis-à-vis the Kanak is only equalled by its blindness.

The immediate trigger for the explosion was the vote in the French parliament on the revision of the electoral body of the colony, which would make the Kanak officially a minority in the local institutions to the advantage of the settlers. This would dispossess the Kanak leaders of the few little sinecures which had been granted to them in the running of the colonial apparatus and the nickel refinery in the North—which moreover has just been closed by its effective owner, the multinational Glencore. The French Duval family, owner of the historic SLN nickel refinery in Nouméa, is also turning away from Kanaky, investing in Indonesia, where the ore is higher grade than that of the Caillou [Kanaky]. The whole nickel sector on which the economy of the island rests is failing. The only way out is to develop industry to refine the ore *in situ*, with the necessary power plants, a plan which is incompatible with the maintenance of colonial oppression and with the law of capitalist profit.

But the whole perspective of the leaders of the FLNKS and the PT/USTKE [Federation of Unions of Kanak and Exploited Workers] is to continue hanging on to the Nouméa Accords, hoping that the colonial power will organise a new self-determination referendum on their behalf and in an "impartial" manner. As long as the Kanak remain caught up in illusions in these accords they will not be able to trace a path forward.

The truth is that Macron has decided to bury the Nouméa Accords definitively, taking advantage of the massive abstention by the Kanak in the referendum of December 2021 (the third and last, according to the accords), at the height of the COVID epidemic. Indeed, the decision of the Kanak leaders to accept the lockdowns in the face of COVID which was then striking the island was correctly interpreted by Paris as submission to the French state. The Kanak chiefs entrusted the struggle against the virus to the colonial power, accepting the locking up of the population at home instead of struggling for an independent path by mobilising the working class against the colonial power to defend the health of the population in the face of the pandemic, and linking this struggle to that for freedom and socialism. Macron took advantage of this, proceeding forcefully with a referendum that he was assured of winning thanks to the abstention decided by the FLNKS and the PT (for our part, we called to

vote yes to independence).

Today in the *métropole* [European France], the urgent task is to mobilise the working class in solidarity with the struggle of the Kanak people. For that it is necessary to show them that they have an interest in a crushing defeat of French imperialism in Kanaky. If French imperialism were chased out of Kanaky it would be of enormous encouragement to the struggle of the working class against capitalist power here—just as Algerian independence in 1962 was the veritable precursor of May 68. The obstacle is the republicanism of the French left which chains the working class to the bourgeoisie. The left continues to support the colonial Nouméa Accords, which it prettifies by talking cynically of a "decolonisation process" and dangling the promise that the Kanak could be given sufficient crumbs while preserving the vital interests of France in the region.

It is obvious that the *banlieue* youth can see in Kanaky a mirror of their own oppression and the similarity between the onslaught of police violence which crushed them last summer and what is being carried out in Nouméa. In the same way, they sympathise with the Palestinian people, victims of the genocidal terror of the Zionist state, which has the full support of French imperialism. To mobilise these youth in particular on the side of the Kanak people it is necessary for starters to forcefully take up their defence against repression and fight for amnesty for all those who have been convicted.

### Mélenchon preaches "decolonisation" within the Republic

This requires crossing a red line in Macron's eyes, a line that the LFI [La France Insoumise, France Unbowed] neither can nor wants to cross. To go forward it is necessary to break with republicanism and all those, including the LFI, who propagate it among the workers and oppressed. Mélenchon hasn't failed to make vague declarations of sympathy for the Kanak people, as he did for the [youth of the] *quartiers* ... and then went on doing nothing to defend them in the face of massive repression. Recall the program of his 2022 campaign, in which he boasted that France was the "second maritime territory of the world" with 11 million square kilometres, a calculation based essentially on France's colonial possessions.

Far from taking the side of the Kanak youth in struggle, Mélenchon now expresses on X (15 May) his "total sadness in the face of the violence sweeping through Nouméa, ruining 40 years of efforts of peace and will to peaceful decolonisation." What cynicism! In these last 40 years, as in those since 1853, the successive governments of French imperialism have done nothing but ***oppress*** the Kanak and ***pillage*** the natural riches of the Caillou! Mélenchon appeals to Jupiter [a nickname for Macron]: "President Macron, it is time to make the gestures which will appease. Rise up to the height of Michel Rocard and François Mitterrand, Tjibaou and Lafleur." Mitterrand (the mentor of Mélenchon), who said in 1954 that "Algeria is France," directed the systematic ***massacre*** of Kanak *indépendantistes* right through the 1980s. His subordinate [then-prime minister] Rocard had the colonial Matignon Accords signed in 1988 in order to put an end to the struggle for independence—the only "decolonisation" worthy of the name. Pro-independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou ***betrayed*** the struggle for Kanak liberation by signing these accords with the chauvinist loyalist Jacques Lafleur! In reality, Mélenchon's only worry is that the short-sighted brutality of Macron will end up losing "New Caledonia" for French imperialism.

For all these reasons, the liberation of the Kanak people and that of the workers and oppressed of France are intimately linked. They require here and in Kanaky a real communist leadership. Socialist and national Kanak liberation requires driving out French imperialism. But this will only be the beginning of the struggle, it will only be possible to complete it with the definitive overthrow of imperialism itself. Today the struggle of the Kanak people for their freedom can be a lever to advance the struggle for socialist revolution in France itself. For the working class in France to seize it, it must break with the republicanism which enchains it. ***French troops, out of the Pacific, Africa and the Near East! Independence now for Kanaky and Polynesia!***



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